

TEXT

Karen Boeger

[Return to Sisyphus](#)

CONTRIBUTORS:

Barbara Taylor

The Morning Chore

Laura Marsico

Patricia Bailey

Rebecca Caldwell

Connie Bostic

Sara Jenkins

Anonymous

Cathryn Griffin

Ken Leslie

Alice Sebrell

Patrick Morris

Linda Larsen

Debra Drees

Tim Jacobs

The List

Bronwyn Vincent

Norma Smith

Anonymous

Lisa Jablow

Chuck Sikora

Lidia Morris

Jean Hess

Matt Liddle

Brenda Coates

Anonymous

Wendy Robbins

Karen Boeger

*It seems to me that chores are sysiphisian tasks, ones that **must be repeated repeatedly**. For us, my husband Dan and I, living in our remote Pahr Mountain sanctuary, hauling hay is one of those tasks. This keeps our 2 scruffy burros fat and happy through the long winter months.*

***Here in outback Nevada**, this year is "the Winter of the big snow" and we are enjoying the experience of being quite thoroughly snowed in. We must haul all supplies, grub, etc. a half-mile into our homestead on our backs or on our spiffy \$20 orange plastic toboggan. Our toboggan routine entails one of us towing from the front while the other tugs on a rope from behind to keep the front person from being flattened by a runaway toboggan as we trudge down our steep hill. Luckily, the snow is now compacted and hard enough that we can walk on it rather than wrangle a load whilst stumbling on clumsy snowshoes.*

***Though chores are useful, even necessary, to me the goal is to make them more useless – that is, more meditative and pleasurable beyond the obvious satisfaction of just getting them done.** I was determined to do just that this morning when faced with the chore of hauling the hay from the truck up on the hill, down to the homestead.*

This morning dawned crisp and clear, the landscape graced with yet another new skiff of snow. We set off up the hill in bright sun, blue sky and scuttling wispy clouds. The new snow was all crystalline sparkles and crunched with a satisfying sound underfoot. The air was sharp and pure, the smell of fresh water, cleansing with each breath. I indulged my habit of following in Dan's exact footsteps so as to mar as little of the pristine new coating of snow as possible. I love the romantic image of a single solitary track in the wilderness of white.

M. Roland

We paused with gratification to observe the sinuous snake of our little creek meandering down the hill -- the gleam of water and green of vegetation a stark contrast cutting through the enveloping white world. Each drop of that blessed water bestows on us an ounce more energy from our hydro-system, supporting our modern lifestyle.

We continue to be amazed at the transformation of our beloved desert landscape – once open sage and juniper covered hills, now a solid wind-sculpted, exponentially more open, expanse of white. We never tire of gazing back at the view – the valley below and rows of white mountains marching off to the West.

My favorite activity while hiking in new snow is to watch for fresh tracks and imagine the story they tell. Today, countless bunny tracks and a looping coyote trail tell a story of life and death, a fateful dance between the cottontails and coyotes. In a year of excess of cottontails, we wish the coyotes good hunting. Still, we hope they will leave just a couple bunnies around the house for us to watch in the early light of dawn, lippity-logging about outside the front window, as we sip our morning coffee.

We pause at the top of the hill to catch our breath and strain our ears for a sound, our world so silent we can hear the blood pulse in our heads. *We scan the sky for our eagle and his mate – will they grace our morning with their high circling loops? Alas, no such luck today.*

Wrestling the 2 bales of hay onto the toboggan, I'm struck by the incongruity of the smell of summer grass here in our winter world. I take the rear rope as we head back down the hill, slowly, so as not to topple our clumsy load. Muscles warming to the task, I'm grateful that, even in my gray-haired stage of life, I still have the strength to steady this 150 pound load that strains to escape and careen downhill on it's own. There is satisfaction in digging my heels into the steep slope. I'm aware that, while on the way up the hill, my focus was outward on all the world around me, but now it is inward, entirely on my body and the task at hand.

Hay stored safe from critters in the garage, our morning chore complete, I experience a wistful pang of regret as I sit on the front porch to take off my snowboots. Entering the house, I

detach from the sensual pleasures of this winter world we live in.

This evening, we sip our cocktails sitting before the fireplace and watch the sky turn cobalt, the last iridescent shade of turquoise fading behind the mountain. I wonder now if next Fall, when we lay in our supply of hay and drive right up to the house, will we be glad to minimize that chore or will we regret we cannot duplicate this one exquisite morning when we felt so alive and at one with our world?